

Virginia Works Newsletter

Fall 1999 -- Virginia Workplace Fatalities Increase Slightly During 1998

The Virginia Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI) showed that there were 176 occupational fatalities in the Commonwealth in 1998. The number of work related deaths increased by 10 from 166 fatalities in 1997.

Transportation accidents were again the leading cause of the fatalities in the workplace, increasing by nine from 1997 and accounting for 75 deaths. The increase was mainly due to a growth of cases in which vehicles struck stationary objects or equipment on the side of the road. Homicides and fatal injuries from contact with objects and equipment each had 26 or 15 percent of the fatal workplace injuries.

Operators, fabricators, and laborers, the largest major occupational group, accounted for 53 of the fatal workplace incidents. The construction industry division had the most deaths in the census and made up 22 percent of work-related fatalities in 1998. The industry division with the largest increase was services, which accounted for 27 of the workplace fatalities, an increase of 16 from 1997 to 1998. The industry division with the largest decrease was retail trade, which had 14 fatalities and decreased by nine from 1997.

Brief summary of the 1998 fatality census:

- Eighty-one percent of the workers killed on the job were wage and salary workers; the rest were self employed.
- Men accounted for 90 percent of the work-related fatalities in Virginia. Seventy-three percent of the fatal victims were white; 20 percent were black.
- Workers aged 25-54, the prime working age group, made up 69 percent of the fatalities in 1998. The number of fatal incidents for workers aged 20-24 decreased from 20 in 1997 to seven in 1998.
- The eight specific occupations with the most workplace fatalities in 1998 were: truck drivers (26), half of their fatalities were due to striking stationary objects or equipment on the side of the road; farmers, except horticultural (7), three were due to overturned tractors; managers and administrators, n.e.c. (7), three fatalities were suicides; police and detectives, public service (6), three fatalities were shootings; supervisors and proprietors, sales occupations (6), five were shootings, timber cutting and logging occupations (5), three were struck by falling trees, roofers (5), all five died from falls, and construction laborers (5).
- The month of July had the highest number of work-related fatalities for 1998 (23), while December had the lowest (9). Fifty-six percent of fatal workplace injuries occurred during the middle of the week, Tuesday-Thursday.
- The Cities of Chesapeake and Richmond each had the highest number of workplace fatalities in 1998 (8) while Fairfax County was the county with the highest count (8).

The Virginia Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries was conducted by the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. The program is designed to provide the community with verified counts of fatal work injuries as well as basic

information on fatalities such as how the injury occurred and the age, occupation, and other demographic data concerning the fatally injured person. It is hoped that the availability of the data will be used to help prevent future fatalities in the workplace. For additional information on Virginia workplace fatalities, you can call (804) 786-1035.

Contributed by Dwight E. Crews, Statistical Analyst Senior, Cooperative Programs, VOSH Research and Analysis Division.